Baptism: Giving Thanks for New Life in Christ Oct. 11, 2026

We're between sermon series, and our focus today will be on celebrating baptisms.

And what a fitting thing to do on Thanksgiving weekend. Because when we gather around these baptismal waters, we are reminded of something at the very heart of our faith:

> **We are saved by God's grace, and we live our lives in grateful response to him.**

Today, we will have the joy of witnessing Donnarie and Trinity (in the 9:30 service) and Noah (in the 11:30 service) publicly declare their faith in Jesus Christ and their desire to follow him as Lord through baptism.

But first, I'd like to share a short teaching that looks at baptism through the lens of thanksgiving.

If you've already been baptized as a follower of Jesus, I pray that today will be a fresh opportunity to give thanks for what God has done in your life, and to renew your commitment to live more fully into your baptized identity as a grateful response to him.

And if you've not yet been baptized, I pray that you'll receive this teaching—and especially the testimonies and example of our candidates—as a personal invitation from Jesus to follow him into the waters of baptism and from there into a life of grateful response to him.

First of all, it's important to understand that:

1. Baptism is a picture of God's rescue.

At Cornerstone, our mission is to make space for Jesus to shape people together in God's love.

When you boil that down, it basically amounts to saying that Cornerstone exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ. A disciple is someone who follows Jesus as Master. And in Matthew 28, Jesus gives his followers this commission:

> "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." [1]

Baptism is therefore an essential part of *making* disciples. It's also essential to *being* a disciple of Jesus—someone who follows him as Master in every aspect of life.

Baptism is not an optional add-on for those who happen to be extra-serious about their Christian faith. Rather, baptism is one of the most basic and fundamental steps in our journey of following Jesus.

And today, on Thanksgiving weekend, baptism gives us a particular reason to thank and to praise God.

[1] Matthew 28:19

Because we are here today not because we have managed to save ourselves, but because God has rescued us.

Throughout the Bible, we see the rescuing power of God.

> In Genesis, God brought Noah and his family safely through the flood waters and into a new life.
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> In Exodus, God led the people of Israel through the parted waters of the Red Sea, out of slavery in Egypt and into a new life as his very own people.
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> In Joshua, God parted the Jordan River and led his people through the water into the Promised Land.
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> And in the story of Jonah, God rescued a disobedient prophet from drowning and gave him a renewed lease on life and a renewed mission to tell others of God's mercy.

These Old Testament stories form the backdrop for baptism.

And in the early part of the New Testament, John the Baptist baptized people in the Jordan River as a sign of repentance, preparing their hearts for the coming Messiah, Jesus, who would be their ultimate rescuer.

And Jesus himself was baptized by John—not because he needed to repent of sin, but as an example of obedience for us to follow, and as a pointer to the fact that Jesus would ultimately make it possible for us to be rescued from sin and death through his death and resurrection.

So that's one thing pictured in baptism: *rescue*.

Rescue through the waters and into new life by a power not our own. We are rescued by God's power in and through Jesus Christ.

And that is something for which we can give thanks. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in Ephesians 2:

> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. [2]

Think about that for a moment. Our salvation is a gift. We did not earn it. We could not achieve it. We could never make ourselves worthy of it.

We were sinners in need of a Saviour, and God, in his love, sent his Son Jesus to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. As Romans 3:23 reminds us:

> All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. [3]

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[2] Ephesians 2:8
[3] Romans 3:23

And yet, God did not abandon us to our sin. He sent Jesus to die for our sins and to rise again from death, so that we can be forgiven—rescued—from sin, judgment, and death.

That is the good news of the gospel. And that is why baptism is such a beautiful expression of thanksgiving. Because when our candidates enter these waters today, they are saying:

> *I am a sinner in need of a Saviour. And I am saying yes, with my whole life, to what God has done for me in Jesus Christ.*

And we, as a congregation, get to celebrate with them. We get to say:

> Thank you, God, for your grace!
>
> Thank you for your mercy!
>
> Thank you for rescuing us through Jesus Christ!

Secondly,

2. Baptism is participation in Jesus' death and resurrection.

Baptism is not only a picture of rescue. It is also a participation in Jesus' death and resurrection. As Paul says in Romans 6:

> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. [4]

As our candidates go down under the water, it is a sign that their old life—driven by sin and self—is dead and buried. And as they come up out of the water, it is a sign that they have been raised to a brand-new life in Jesus.

Now, this doesn't mean baptism is magic. It doesn't mean that when you come up out of the water, you'll never have any more problems. It doesn't mean that you'll instantly become like Jesus in character.

That will take time and intentionality on your part, and a lifetime of grace from God.

Nevertheless, baptism is a sign that God has begun his work of masterpiece restoration in your life. Because you are God's masterpiece, created in his image, to reflect his likeness and character. But sin has marred the image of God in all of us.

Baptism is a sign that God is at work to restore his image in us, shaping us to become more and more like Jesus.

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[4] Romans 6:4

And again, that is something for which we can give thanks. Because the Christian life is not simply about what we do for God. It begins with what God has done for us.

God has not only forgiven us; he has begun to make us new. God has not only rescued us from our past; he has given us a future. God has not only called us out of darkness; he has called us into his marvelous light. As Paul says in Colossians 3:

> Since, then, you have been raised with Christ… put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. [5]

And so, on this Thanksgiving weekend:

> We give thanks for the work God has begun in us.
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> We give thanks that he is not finished with us.
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> We give thanks that his grace is sufficient for every step of the journey.
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> And we give thanks that, because Jesus has been raised from the dead, we too may live a new life, anchored in the eternal hope that one day, he will make all things new.

Thirdly,

3. Baptism is a declaration of identity.

It's about who you are, and whose you are. Through baptism, your life becomes bound up with the life of Jesus Christ.

And as a baptized disciple or follower of Jesus, your identity is no longer defined by your past, what other people think or say about you, your job, your wealth or social status, your achievements, your family or culture of origin, your nationality, or your political affiliation.

Rather, your identity is defined by who God says you are in Jesus Christ.

And what does God say about us? First, he says: **You are a beloved child of God.**

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the voice of God the Father could be heard from heaven:

> "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." [6]

And through Jesus, we too are welcomed into the family of God. As the Bible says in 1 John:

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[5] Colossians 3:1, 10
[6] Mark 11:1

> See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! [7]

It's an identity thing! Through baptism, you're given the unspeakable opportunity and privilege of becoming God's very own child.

To be a child of God means that you are unconditionally loved and completely accepted by God in Christ. There is nothing you could do to make God love you more, and there is nothing you could do that would make God love you less.

You no longer have to strive to find your sense of identity or your sense of worth. You need look nowhere else to define who you are, because God defines who you are in Christ. You are his beloved child, and he loves you so much that he thought you were worth Jesus dying for.

And that is something for which we can give thanks.

> Thank you, Father, that you have loved us so much that you sent your Son for us!
>
> Thank you that we are not defined by our failures, our accomplishments, or the opinions of others!
>
> Thank you that, in Christ, we are your beloved children!

Next, through baptism, God says that: **You are a member of God's family.**

In 1 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul says:

> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body. [8]

In baptism, we become members of a new family—the church, the body of Christ. And just like the various parts of your body need each other, we as Christians need each other in order to grow and become all we were meant to become in Jesus.

This is another reason why baptism is such a joyful occasion.

Because when someone is baptized, we are not simply celebrating an individual decision. We are celebrating the work of God that brings us together into one body.

We are celebrating that, in Christ, we belong to one another.

And that is especially worth remembering on Thanksgiving weekend.

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[7] 1 John 3:1
[8] 1 Corinthians 12:13

Because the Christian life is not a solo journey. We need one another. We need one another's encouragement, prayer, wisdom, correction, compassion, and love.

So, I call on our baptismal candidates—and the whole congregation—to actively live out your identity as members of Christ's body.

Church isn't simply a place you go; it's who you are! Engage wholeheartedly in the life of the local church—in group life, in serving, in giving, in inviting others to Cornerstone.

And as you do, give thanks:

> Give thanks for the people God has placed around you.
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> Give thanks for the brothers and sisters who have walked with you.
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> Give thanks for those who have prayed for you, encouraged you, and helped you grow.
>
> Give thanks that God has not left us to follow Jesus alone.
>
> He has made us part of his family.

The next part of your baptized identity is that: **You are an agent of God's mission.**

Did you know that God has a mission? God's mission is to restore this fallen world through Jesus Christ. And when we become followers of Christ, we become agents of God's mission.

Indeed, when our candidates are baptized today, they are being plunged into God's mission. A vital aspect of their baptized identity in Christ will be as agents of God's mission.

Because the family of God—the church—exists for the sake of God's mission to restore the world. In John 20, Jesus says to his followers:

> "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." [9]

So would you please repeat after me? ***We are sent people.***

As baptized followers of Jesus, we are *sent* to be agents of God's world-restoring mission.

And for this reason, God gives each of us unique passions, gifts, strengths, skills, and callings so that we can bring his rescuing, redeeming love to the world around us in any number of different ways.

This means that thanksgiving is more than a feeling. Because when we give thanks to God for what he has done for us, our response of gratitude begins to overflow into the lives of others.

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[9] John 20:21

We give thanks by becoming people who share God's generosity.

We give thanks by welcoming those who feel like outsiders.

We give thanks by serving our neighbours.

We give thanks by using the gifts God has given us for the sake of his mission.

We give thanks by becoming people through whom others experience the love of Jesus.

And so, my encouragement to our candidates—and to all of you—is to take every opportunity to explore and discover the ways that God is wiring and calling you to be an agent of his mission in this world. Jump in on a workshop like RePurposed the next time it's offered, or ask Pastor Andrew about the one-on-one coaching he offers to help people explore their life-callings.

Because God has not simply rescued you *from* something. He has rescued you *for* something. He has called you into a new life, a new family, and *a new mission*.

And we can give thanks that he calls us to such purpose-filled lives.

Today we've seen three dimensions of the meaning and purpose of baptism.

It's a picture of rescue.

It's a participation in Jesus' death and resurrection.

And it's a declaration of identity—a declaration that you are a beloved child of God, a member of God's family, and an agent of God's world-restoring mission in Christ.

And so, as we witness baptisms today, let's celebrate and indeed *give thanks* for what God has done and is doing—in the lives of our candidates, in our own lives, and in and through the life of this entire community of faith called Cornerstone.

Invite candidates up (9:30 - Donnarie, Trinity; 11:30 – Noah)

- Do you believe you are a sinner in need of a Saviour? If so, say, "I do."
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rode from the dead so that you could have eternal life? If so, say, "I do."
- Do you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord? If so, say, "I do."
- Do you believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead? If so, say, "I do."
- Do you renounce Satan and all his works? If so, say, "I renounce them."
- Do you intend to follow Jesus the rest of your days? If so, say, "With all my heart."
- Do you accept God's summons to join him in his mission to restore this world in a way that fits the gifts, talents, and callings he gives you? If so, say, "I do."